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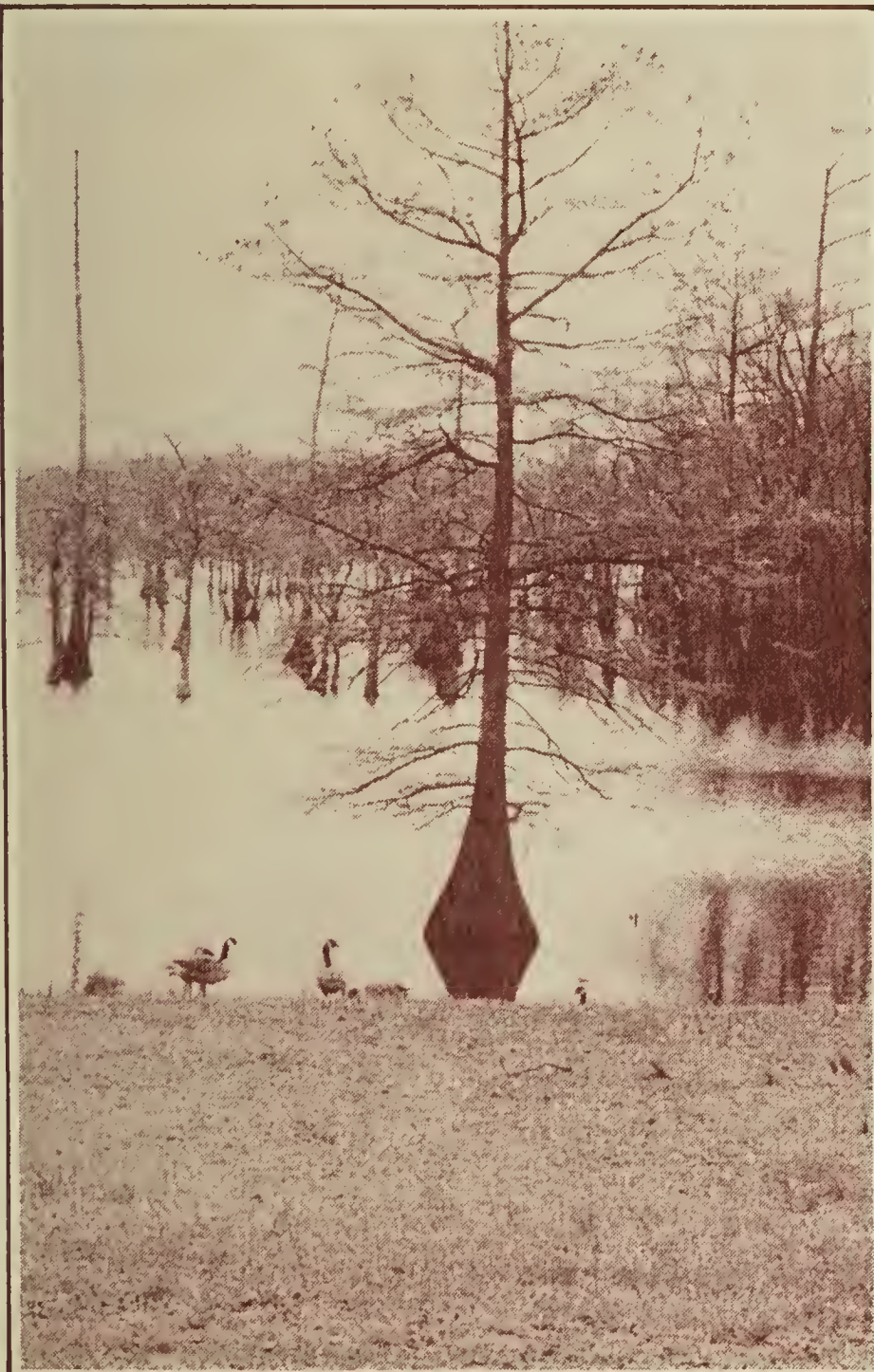
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Horseshoe Lake

CONSERVATION AREA



CONSERVATION

THE AREA

Known for its large flock of wintering Canada geese, Horseshoe Lake Conservation Area, located seven miles northwest of Cairo in Alexander County, has facilities for anglers, picnickers, campers, boaters, and hunters. The 10,337-acre area includes a 2,400-acre shallow lake.

THE LAKE

Horseshoe Lake, noted for its large stands of cypress, tupelo gum and swamp cottonwood, is a beautiful body of water. Prior to 1930, the lake was subject to moisture conditions of the year and went partially dry during July and August of most years.

In 1927 the Illinois Department of Conservation purchased 49 acres and continued purchasing tracts around the lake, including Horseshoe Island, for a sanctuary for Canada geese. In 1929, a stoplog spillway structure was constructed. During the last month of 1930, a concrete, fixed spillway was constructed and began to function, establishing an only slightly fluctuating 2,400-acre lake with a maximum depth of six feet and a 20-mile shoreline. This reduced the zone of intermittent flooding to some two feet in elevation, which prior to this work was flooded as much as six to eight feet.

The Canada goose flock began using Horseshoe Island in 1928 when approximately 1,000 birds arrived. The population increased to over 40,000 in 1943-44; however, due to mediocre management and lack of harvest controls, the population was reduced to an estimated 22,000 in 1946-47. At this time, the season in southern Illinois was closed for a short period followed by closing 18,000 acres of public and private lands to hunting. Then the refuge management improved and harvest controls were instigated. The present wintering population is in excess of 150,000.

Although Horseshoe Lake has a large population of geese during the winter months, it receives much attention from fishermen, especially those willing to forget their deep water techniques long enough to learn how to fish in shallow water. The most popular fishing technique here is bucktailing, apparently developed at this lake, but highly successful in many other lakes.

A bucktail is a small leadhead jig which is tied with several short strands of hair. Although the lure's name implies that deer hair is used, bucktails are tied with calf hair. Bucktail fishing involves the use of a fly rod with monofilament line. The lure is fished a foot or more deep, either bounced up and down or moved around to simulate the swimming of a minnow. No bobber is used with a bucktail; it is fished tightline. When a fish hits, the angler will feel the strike.

The Refuge Zone is on the island, the lake and all surrounding state property not designated as public hunting ground. A variety of food requirements such as green



pasture and grain crops are produced for goose food and research programs including banding operations are carried out. At this time, approximately 50,000 birds have been trapped, banded, and released.

NATURAL SCENE

The natural setting of Horseshoe Lake Conservation Area is reminiscent of the deep south. It is dominated by the bald cypress, tupelo gum, and swamp cottonwood trees which border the lake. The southern theme is also reflected in the total flora and fauna of the area which is typical of that found in a souther swampland.

Some of the more notable natural attractions are the waterfowl and the bald eagle populations present during the fall and winter months. The beautiful red buckeye shrubs flower abundantly during April as do the wild lotus in June.

There are several large tracts of native southern hardwood forests on the area. Two of the larger undisturbed stands are dedicated as Illinois Nature Preserves and are managed as natural areas for scientific research, educational use, and public visitation.

FACILITIES

Picnicking — Four picnic areas are scattered around the area with convenient parking lots. Picnic tables and park stoves are available. There is a playground near the spillway. Eight drinking hydrants or fountains are around the lake.

Concession Stand — On the west side of the lake, the concession stand has a variety of light refreshments and is open during warm months.

Hunting — There is one hunting area for squirrel only and one area for Canada geese (by permit only), deer (archery only), squirrel and dove (see map). Consult the



site superintendent or refuge manager for information concerning shooting times and opening dates for hunting.

Fishing and Boating — The lake contains bluegill, sunfish, crappie, largemouth bass, and channel catfish. Six launching ramps are conveniently located around the lake. Nine boat docks accommodate either rental or private boats. There is a 10 h.p. motor limit; however, motors are not allowed from October 15 - March 1.

Camping — The area will accommodate 50 tents and 100 trailers. There is electricity and a sanitary station for trailers. Water hydrants and pit toilets are conveniently located.

Shower — West side campground.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Groups of 25 or more persons will not be admitted to any state site unless permission from the site superintendent has been obtained to use the facilities. In addition, groups of minors must have adequate supervision and at least one responsible adult must accompany each group of 15 minors. All pets must be on a leash.

Numerous state sites are within easy access of every part of Illinois. Lodges, cabins, and dining rooms are important features of Illinois Beach, Starved Rock, Pere Marquette, and Giant City; White Pines Forest and Cave-In-Rock have cabins and dining rooms only; and Black Hawk has dining rooms only. Reservations for lodging should be made with lodge managers.

All state sites are open the year round, except on Christmas Day and New Year's Day. When weather conditions necessitate the closing of roads during freezing and thawing periods, access to facilities is by foot only.

For more details about camping, picnicking, fishing and hunting, contact Site Superintendent, Box 85, Miller City, IL 62962, phone (618) 776-5689 or 776-5215.

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Park Map



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